

‘Agni-stoma / Jyotir-stoma Yajna’ -- for uplifting the dead man’s soul to heaven

Abstract

The IVC scripts show the influence of ancient Egyptian civilization and also ideas of Vedic religion. In Egyptian tombs and pyramids, a miniature ladder model was kept to help the deceased person climb up to heaven. The ladder symbol could be indicating the ascendancy of the dead man’s soul to heaven. The Agni-stoma and Jyotir-stoma yajnas were performed for this purpose.



Wallis Budge in his book, ‘[EGYPTIAN MAGIC](#)’

explains that in tombs of the ancient and middle dynasty of Egyptian civilization, small models of ladders (Talisman size) have often been found. They believed that using the ladder, the dead man could climb up to heaven. The ancient Egyptians believed that the sky was made of an immense iron plate and rectangular in shape. The four corners of which rested upon four pillars that served to mark the cardinal points. (1)

The gods and the blessed dead lived on this iron plate, and every good Egyptian aimed to go there after death. At certain sacred spots, the edge of the plate was so near the tops of the mountains that the deceased might easily clamber on to it and so

obtain admission into heaven, but for others, the distance between it and the earth was so great that he needed help to reach it. (1)

There existed a belief that Osiris himself experienced some difficulty getting up to the iron plate. It was only **utilizing the ladder** which his father Ra provided that he at length ascended into heaven. On one side of the ladder stood Ra, and on the other stood Horus, the son of Isis, and each god assisted Osiris to mount it. (1) Using the same technique, other Pharaohs also ascended to heaven.



The above given two symbols are very peculiar and difficult to explain. At least the ladder symbol is straightforward to identify. However, the second symbol is complicated to ascertain. Fortunately, the more difficult it is for a grapheme to interpret the best, and precise information comes out of such grapheme. Both these graphemes indicate the idea of **raising the dead man's** soul to heaven. The '**ladder**' symbolizes the ascending pathway to heaven. Where ever such 'ideogram' appears in Indus inscriptions, such ideogram gives a meaning of '*Jyotir stoma Yajna*'.

Somayāga is a general name for those sacrifices in which libations of the soma juice are offered in the duly consecrated fire. *Agniṣṭoma* is a typical *Somayāga*, forming the *prakṛti* or model for

other Soma sacrifices. It is such an integral part of another well-known sacrifice, *Jyotir-ṣtoma*, that these two are often identified same. Literally, the word '*Agniṣtoma*' means 'praise of Agni', and the rite derives its name from the hymns called a stoma (a group of three *ṛks*) which are chanted in praise of Agni towards the end of the ritual. (1)

According to Wikipedia, the Jyotistoma yajna is meant to elevate the yajamana or the host to heaven. This Yajna is also called agnistome Yajna. (2). This observation made in Wikipedia raises an interesting question. Is this Yajna conducted for a living person (or) for raising the soul of a dead person to heaven? My observation so far is that all the rituals mentioned in Indus seals are rituals pertaining to dead people. How can this ritual alone be meant for a living person? Most probably, the Jyoti-stoma Yajnas were conducted only for uplifting the dead man's soul to heaven. But it looks like that during the course of the passage of time, the purpose is transformed into 'elevation of **Yajamana** to heaven' (i.e., raising a living person to heaven).

The procedure of conducting Jyoti stoma Yagna:

On the first day, *somapravākas* or heralds of Soma sacrifice are sent out to invite priests. Rites to be performed are choosing the priests, *dīkṣā* (initiatory rites) of the person performing sacrifice including another small sacrifice called *Dīkṣaṇīyā- isti* and construction of bamboo sheds.

On the second day, apart from purchasing the soma creepers and 'welcoming' them ceremonially, two more rites called **pravargya** and **upasad** are performed.

On the third day, pravargya and upasad rites are repeated, followed by the construction of mahāvedi and uttaravedi (altars for performing the sacrifices).

On the fourth day, after once again performing pravargya and upasad rites, fire is ceremonially transferred from the old and permanent sacrificial shed to the new. This is known as agnīṣoma-praṇayana. An animal sacrifice (paśu-bandha) is also performed. (1)

On the fifth and the last day, called '**sutyā**,' the soma juice is extracted ceremonially three times and offered. (3)

The first offering, called prātassavana, is done in the morning.

The second offering, called mādhyandina-savana, is done at noon. At the end of this, sacrificial fees are distributed.

The third and last pressing is called tṛtīyā.

At the end of the sacrifice, all those directly involved in it have **avabhṛtha-snāna** (ceremonial bath marking the conclusion of the sacrifice). (3)

References

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